

GOSPEL PARALLELS FROM PÂLI TEXTS.

Translated from the originals by ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

I GAVE some facts about the pre-Christian antiquity of the Pâli Texts in a note in *The Open Court* for November, 1898. The question of Hindû ideas reaching Palestine is still on its trial. The interchange of thought between Greece and India was part of the programme of Alexander, who took Greek artists on his Eastern expedition. When his successors at Alexandria began translating the Old Testament, they were carrying out his cosmic plan. Diodorus of Sicily states this plan :

“[Alexander decreed] that there should be interchanges between cities, and that people should be transferred out of Asia into Europe, and conversely out of Europe into Asia, to the end that the two great continents, by intermarriages and exchange of good offices, might become homogeneous and established in mutual friendship.” (*Diod. Sic.* XVIII. 4).

The Alexandrian librarian pointed out to Ptolemy the lore of the Hindûs and others, while the court of Antioch set Berosus to translate the records of the Babylonians. The Old Testament was already in progress. Now, while the Greeks were thus translating the Sacred Books of the East, twenty-one centuries before Max Müller, Asoko was sending Buddhist missionaries into their empire. Why should not these two outreachings have met ? Asoko boasts that his mission made headway. Even though the Buddhist oracles were still oral, they can have left traces among ascetics in Palestine and Egypt. The origin of the Essenes is still a mystery ; but the semi-Christian Elkesaites, according to Hippolytus, came “from Seres of Parthia,” i. e. Buddhists. Hippolytus also tells us that the Docetæ taught that Christ came to abolish transmigration. Now, Gotamo says, on the first page of the *Itivuttaka*, the Buddhist Logia-Book : “I am your surety against return to earth.”

Joseph Jacobs has shown that Hindû fairy-tales were known in Palestine in the first century, and the Jâtaka stories represent their hero as being educated at Taxila, the centre of Indo-Greek learning. *The Questions of King Milindo* exhibit Buddhist schools of reciters, at the time of the Christian era, keeping up the sacred lore, which was enquired into by intelligent Greeks.

In the Book of Discipline, Gotamo predicts that his religion will last for five hundred years. Now these figures have been altered to five thousand in uncanonical works written after the time of Christ, i. e. after the five hundred years had expired. Therefore, the Book of Discipline would appear to have been untampered with since that date; and the Canon may well have been put into its written form about 90 B. C., as the Ceylon Chronicles state.

These remarks are the summary of an essay, giving full references, the result of years of research. No borrowing is alleged on either side—Christian or Buddhist—in these Parallels. We offer no theory, but present them as facts. They at least belong to a world of thought which the whole East had in common.

THE CHRIST REMAINS [ON EARTH] FOR THE ÆON.

John xii. 34. Udâna VI. 1; and Book of the Great Decease, p. 23. (Translated in S. B. E. XI. p. 40).

[This is not a New Testament doctrine, but a current belief at the time of Christ. Commentators have been at a loss to identify the Old Testament passage which is supposed to be quoted. *The Twentieth Century New Testament* proposes the Aramaic version of Isaiah ix. 7 as the source. Be that as it may, we have here a verbal Pâli parallel.]

Ânando, any one who has practised the four mystical methods—developed them, made them a vehicle and an aim, pursued them accumulated, and striven to the height thereof,—can, if he so should wish, *remain* [on earth] *for an æon* or the rest of an æon. Now, Ânando, the Tathâgato has practised and perfected these; and if he so should wish, *the Tathâgato could remain* [on earth] *for an æon* or the rest of the æon.

[The words in italics agree with those in the Greek of John, except the mood and tense of the verb. Rendel Harris has pointed out to me that the tense of μένει is ambiguous, being either present or future. This is because the manuscripts are without accents. Tathâgato is a religious title equivalent to Christ. Its exact meaning is doubtful.]

FEW THAT ARE SAVED.

Matth. vii. 13, 14; Luke xiii. 23, 24. *Aṅguttara Nikāyo* I 19 (Not before translated).

Monks! just as, in this India, there are only a few pleasant parks, groves, landscapes, and lotus-ponds, but far more of broken ground, impassable rivers, tree-stumps, thorny roads, and rugged rocks: so also, monks! there are few beings who, when vanished from the human, are born again among humans; but far more who, when vanished from the human, are born again in hell, in the wombs of brutes or the haunt of ghosts; few who are born among the angels, more who are born as I have said. And there are few beings, O monks! who, when vanished from the angelic, are born again among angels, but far more who vanish from the angelic to be born again in hell, in the wombs of brutes or the haunt of ghosts.

ASCENSION.

Udāna VIII. 9. (Not before translated).

This story is more analogous to the ascension of Elijah in the Second Book of Kings than to that of Christ, as related in the first chapter of Acts. There is no account of the Ascension in the Synoptical Gospels, except a single line in Luke xxiv. 51,¹ while the Mark Appendix is a later addition. John refers to the Ascension as a spiritual fact; so does Paul; but the only pictorial account is that of Acts. In the Pāli legend, the hero is Dabbo the Mallian, a disciple of Buddha's who had extraordinary psychical powers. The Book of Discipline tells us that he was able to light the monks to bed by emitting magnetic flames from his fingers. See *Sacrea Books of the East*, Vol. xx., p. 7.]

Thus have I heard. At one season the Blessed One was staying in the Bamboo Grove beside the Squirrels' feeding-ground, at Rājagaha. And the venerable Dabbo the Mallian approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat on one side, and so sitting, said to him: "O Auspicious One, my time is at hand to enter Nirvāṇa."²—"Whatever you think fit, O Dabbo."—Then the venerable Dabbo the Mallian rose from his seat, saluted the Blessed One, and keeping on his right hand, went up into the sky, and sat in the posture of meditation in the ether, in the empyrean. Intensely meditating on the nature of flame, he ascended and passed into Nirvāṇa.

¹ The doubt thrown upon this line in the margin of the Revised Version of 1881 was dispelled when the Sinai Syriac was found.

² See my defensive note on this rendering in my translation of Digha 14. (*The Marvellous Birth of the Buddhas*: Philadelphia, 1899, p. 4.)

And when the venerable Dabbo the Mallian had thus gone up, meditated and ascended, there remained neither ashes nor soot of his body when passed away,¹ consumed and burnt. Even as, when ghee or oil is consumed and burnt, neither ashes nor soot remains, so was it with the body of the venerable Dabbo the Mallian. And forthwith the Blessed One, having understood the fact, gave vent on that occasion to the following Udâna :

“The body dissolved, perception ceased, all sensations were utterly consumed ;

“The constituents of existence were stilled, consciousness and sense departed.”

SUPERNATURAL BIRTH.

Luke i. 35. Majjhima Nikâyo, Sutta 38. Quoted in *The Questions of King Milindo*, p. 123, but *not* translated in *S. B. E.* XXXV.

Conception takes place, O monks, by the union of three. In this world the father and the mother are united. The mother may be capable, but the genius (*gandhabbo*, Sanskrit *gandharva*), may not be ready. It is by the union of these three, O monks, that conception takes place.

[Neumann, in his German translation, expands the text here, perhaps from the commentary.]

THE SAVIOUR IS UNIQUE.

John i. 14 and 18 (“only begotten”); Hebrew ix. 26 (“once, at the end of the ages.”)
 Ânguttara Nikâyo I. 15.

It is unlikely and impossible, O monks, for two Arahats who are perfect Buddhas to arise simultaneously in the same world-system: this is not likely. But it is likely, O monks, for one Arahât who is a perfect Buddha, to arise in one world-system: this is quite likely.

[A similar statement is made of an emperor;² and then it is denied that a woman can be a Buddha, an emperor—strangely contradicted by fact—a Sakko, a Mâro, or a Brahmâ.]

SAVING FAITH IN THE LORD.

Luke xxiii. 42, 43. Majjhima Nikâyo, Sutta 22.

Thus, O monks, is the Doctrine well taught by me—plain, patent, clear, and with the old cloth cut away.³ Seeing, O monks,

¹ Or, *passed into Nirvâna*, as above. It is a special word, only used for the death of an Arahât.

² I was interested to learn lately from the lips of a Hindu that the ancient title *chakkavatti* applied to-day to the Queen of England as Empress of India.

³ Cf. Mark ii. 21.

that the Doctrine is thus well taught [etc.], all those who have merely faith and love toward me are sure of Paradise hereafter.

HE WHO SEES THE TRUTH SEES THE LORD.

John xiv. 6 and 9.

Itivuttaka 92.

O monks, even if a monk should gather up the folds of his robe and follow behind me, treading in my footsteps, yet if he be covetous, on lusts intent, bad-hearted, corrupt in his mind's aspiration, heedless, mindless, ill-conducted, with heart confused and unripe faculties, then is he far from me, and I from him. And why? Because, O monks, that monk sees not the Doctrine; and he who sees not the Doctrine sees not me. But if that monk should dwell an hundred leagues away, O monks, and be not covetous, nor intent on lusts, not bad-hearted nor corrupt in his mind's aspiration, but heedful, mindful, well-conducted, with concentrated heart and faculties restrained, then is he near to me, and I to him. And why? Because, O monks, that monk sees the Doctrine; and HE WHO SEES THE DOCTRINE SEES ME.

[The word *Doctrine* is the ubiquitous *Dhammo*, Sanskrit *Dharma*; and can be equally well translated *Truth* or *Religion*.]